

# Orleans Has A School - Somehow

Orleans, a small Humboldt County town badly hit by recent floods has a grade school principal who just won't close his school in spite of recurring disasters.

Now he even has the U. S. Army on his side and 70 air-lifted desks to prove it.

Mr. Keith Sears, principal and teacher at Orleans Elementary School, watched a series of water and fire disasters divide his single school into three separate temporary schools.

Now, there are two on one side of the river and another across the swift Klamath waters to accomodate children who can't cross to a central location because of the bridgeless river or dangerous slide conditions.

Fire caused by a defective generator burned down the original school house and left Principal Sears without a school, books or desks. Temporary schools without supplies were established then and Sears got word by the school board that school must go on, desks or no desks.

After getting the "back to school" order, the teacher remembered an earlier acquaintance with an Army pilot, Chief Warrant Officer Howard Wells, Jr., 17th Aviation Company, Fort Benning, Georgia, whom he had sympathized with when the Army pilot's "Caribou" plane stuck in the Orleans mud near the school house during a supply mission.

Through this contact, the determined principal got his tale of "no desks" to the Army, explaining a very down-to-earth fact that, "a school without desks was like a pilot without a plane." But the teacher felt his plea was futile to Army ears, and while hearing continually that no desks would arrive, out of the sky dropped an

Army "caribou" with the 70 desks and school equipment.

With the poor conditions in the area, school had just gotten started when the temporary school building went up in flames endangering students and the airlifted desks.

Sears mobilized his students into a desk-brigade and passed the valued scholastic furniture to safety through a student line. This called for another temporary school setup, so it was done again.

Now, although things aren't altogether normal for the Orleans Elementary School, at least the desks are safe and the students are back in them and back in school - or schools, that is. Now their principal and teacher commute by boat across the rough Klamath river in the morning and visit three schools a day, braving the slides and poor travel conditions.

A normal day includes one visit to the former Assembly of God building which was donated by the church for Mr. Sears' students, then to the former Seventh Day Adventists' build-

ing which was also donated, and finally to the "Tackle-Bait School," a building that was a bait shop and was lent to the disaster-battling principal of Orleans.

Now, about the nicest even in the future, according to Sears, will be arrival of some air-lifted books promised by the Army, which is still handling flood supply operations out of Headquarters Sixth US Army at the Presidio of San Francisco, under the direction of Colonel James Lee, Sixth Army disaster Coordinator for California.